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ABSTRACT

The involvement of parents, even those from low income settings and with minimal schooling, is a key factor in a child's academic achievement. A teacher's decision to classify a student perceived to have classroom difficulties as "at-risk" initiates a formal process of referral, testing, labeling, and placement resulting in different educational opportunities for that student. The teacher's perceptions of this student may differ from those of the student's parents. The cases of 12 students in the second or third grade who had been identified as "at risk" by their teachers were chosen for examination. The children ranged in age from 7 to 9.5 years old. Half of the children were Hispanic, from homes where Spanish was the dominant language. Interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, and students, and school records were examined. Findings include the following: (1) discrepancies existed between parents' and school personnel's perceptions of the child; (2) information was often not solicited from parents by school personnel; (3) school personnel's perceptions were more important than parents' perceptions in making decisions about the child's school career; (4) information was sometimes withheld from parents by school personnel; (5) parents seemed to accept the judgments of school personnel and set aside their own doubts; (6) class size may prevent the development of strong home-school relationships based on collaboration. A detailed case study of a typical student (a 10-year-old Hispanic boy named Gilberto) and a brief list of references are included. (FMW)

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CONFLICTING VIEWS OF 'AT-RISK' STUDENTS

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CONFLICTING VIEWS OF 'AT-RISK' STUDENTS

Ursula Casanova

Introduction.

Children in school are a captive, often unwilling audience. As such they are particularly vulnerable to the opinions of school personnel. Those adult opinions are particularly important at certain points of interaction between educators and students which lead to decisions generating different educational opportunities.[1] A teacher's decision to classify a student as "at-risk" is one such decision. It represents a preliminary step in the acknowledgement of classroom difficulties. This acknowledgement precedes, and is often followed by a more formal process of referral, testing, labeling, and placement in special classes. Learning about the school experiences of "at-risk" students helps us to understand the meaning of that term as used in the school context, and the immediate instructional consequences that such a designation may have for the child.

One way to learn about the school experiences of young children is to ask their teachers and examine their school records. You can also ask the children themselves, and you can gain additional insight through observations of the children in the classroom. Another, less commonly accessed source of data is the children's parents. While all of these avenues were utilized in this study,* in this paper I concentrate on data gathered from parents about their children. I then compare the parent data with data gathered from school personnel, and with the researchers' own observations in an interest to identify the level of congruence existing across parent and teacher perceptions of the children.

Since it is not possible to discuss each of the twelve cases included in this study within the constraints of this presentation, I have selected one case, that of Gilberto, as an example of the type of data we gathered and our analysis of those data. I will present in sequence the perceptions expressed by school personnel and by his mother about Gilberto. I will then add data from our own observations. Finally, I will offer a comparison of these perspectives and also draw on data from the remaining case studies to

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* Richardson-Koehler, V., Casanova, U., Placier, P.& Guilfoyle, K. Positioning at-risk students for success. Final Report to the Exxon Foundation. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona.

present a more general view of our findings in reference to the relationship between parents and school personnel in this study.

Parent Data

The parent data was collected through two interviews. The first interview was informal and designed to gain Gilberto's mother's permission for his participation in the study. Some preliminary information was also obtained, as well as an impressionistic view of the child's home situation.

The second interview was conducted towards the end of the study also at Gilberto's home and with the aid of a semi-structured instrument. That interview lasted over an hour. Gilberto's mother was interviewed in Spanish, her language of preference.

School Personnel

I use 'school personnel' rather than teachers as a collective term which includes a number of adults who were directly involved with Gilberto. Three of these adults were teachers -- homeroom, learning disabilities, and ESL, but the nurse, and the speech therapist also saw Gilberto regularly, and the school psychologist had insterviewed, tested and passed judgment on him. His perceptions were available through the school records. All of them were interviewed formally and notes were also kept on many informal interviews as they occurred throughout the study.

School personnel views were augmented through analysis of Gilberto's school records. Through these we were able to examine changes through time in student achievement and school personnel perceptions, as well as diagnostic and standardized test data.

Gilberto

At the time of the study the children were in the second or third grade at one of two schools. They ranged in age between seven and 9 1/2 yrs. old. Six of the students were Hispanic, and all of these were from homes where Spanish was the dominant language; three of the children were Anglo; two Black; and one the child of a Vietnamese mother and an Anglo father

Gilberto was a Hispanic boy,10 years old, and in the third grade at the time of the study. He was a good-looking, sturdy boy of average height and weight with a ready smile and friendly demeanor.

The school records

Between kindergarten and the end of first grade Gilberto attended four different schools. An undated kindergarten form indicated that Gilberto

had no learning problems but the first withdrawal form indicated that Gilberto was an "ESL student below grade level due to language barrier. suggesting that the language of instruction at that time was English.

By the first grade his teacher noted that Gilberto needed to improve in all areas, and also that he should be observed the following year. His second grade teacher referred him to the Child study Team. Her referral was based on "difficulty working independently, especially in tasks in reading, writing and spelling." She added that he reversed letters, "had trouble remembering visual cues" and "focusing on written work."

The school psychologist decided that Gilberto was learning disabled due to severe auditory and visual deficits. Remediation in Spanish four times a week was recommended, including intensive work in the development of visual processing, memory and attention, and perceptual motor skills.

The speech and language teacher also evaluated Gilberto and decided that he suffered "verbal developmental dyspraxia." He was assigned to receive language therapy twice a week in order to improve his "coarticulation skills" for "maximally intelligible speech." The boy was also assigned to ESL classes.

The teachers

According to his teachers Gilberto was a "sweetheart" who had a "sparkling" personality and "tries very hard." He was a foster child and the youngest of ten siblings from more than one father. He was not well cared for at home and his love of school treats suggested that he lacked such things at home.

Gilberto's reading was "labored" and at the "sound level." Although he tried hard, and was enthusiastic about school, Gilberto was not learning well and was considered by his teacher to be "at-risk." This might have been due to his "dyspraxia." One teacher defined dyspraxia as his inability to fully express his thoughts in language. The diagnosis originated with the speech and language therapist.

The mother

Gilberto was the middle child in a family of seven. His mother said he had been a healthy baby who walked and talked early, climbed everywhere and was "tremendo." He could say anything he wanted very early, she remembered, but was stubborn about letting her know when he needed a bathroom until quite late. The boy's grandmother used to cover up for him.

Gilberto was described by his mother as clever, friendly, daring, and enterprising, always sure of himself and ready to start a conversation with anyone, "whether rich or poor." He would also take off after whatever interested him and this had caused her no end of difficulties. She told a story of Gilberto taking off one day in Mexico to show a man a hole through which he could cross the border. When she found him he justified his action by saying the man looked like "buena gente." Gilberto's mother worried that one day he would meet up with one of those "crazy people who like to hurt children."

At home Gilberto liked to watch TV and play with his younger brother, his favorite member of the family. He would often bring him little trinkets and treats from school and also protected him from punishment.

Gilberto's mother did not understand why he had any problems at school since he was so quick and clever at home. The teachers had told her that he had trouble remembering things but she did not quite accept this. At home he was always repeating all the jokes, jingles, and stories he heard on the radio or TV. She said that the previous year he used to struggle very hard to decode words but she had noticed a lot of improvement lately. He now read all kinds of books, she said, and she had just started him in the catechism in preparation for his First Communion.

She had always wanted her children to do well in school and her male companion, the father of the two youngest children, also insisted on rules for bedtime and homework. Gilberto's mother wondered if maybe he got distracted at school, or perhaps his current teacher was too easy on him, he needed a "short rein," she claimed However, she was confident that Gilberto would eventually do well in school since he did enjoy going to school and the teachers told her that he behaved and was respectful.

<u>The Gilberto we saw</u>

The first day the observer visited the classroom, Gilberto greeted her with a smile and wanted to know what she was doing--if she saw someone hitting another person, would she tell? Another day, when both observers were present, the class lined up for recess and Gilberto called out:"Aren't you guys coming?" This type of familiar bantering, and ease with adults was characteristic of Gilberto throughout the study.

Gilberto's poverty, more than that of any child in the room, was evident in the condition of his winter jacket and shabby clothes, but he was

always clean and seemed to have no self-consciousness about his appearance. On the contrary, he appeared to be a happy, self-confident child.

Gilberto had a busy schedule. In addition to his regular classroom, he participated in several special classes: learning disabilities, English as a Second Language (ESL), and speech therapy. On a typical day, Gilberto spent time in six different classrooms.

Gilberto said that his purpose in school was to "pass grade." And he thought he was the "worst in the class" because he only got "B" or "C." ...never...100." He became excited when he described a science lesson on magnets. He was fascinated with the way they attracted and repelled each other: "...you couldn't take them off...looked like they were married, they didn't want to let go."

Gilberto chose Spanish for the interview but he frequently and unconsciously shifted from Spanish to English and back again dring the conversation. The interweaving of languages during the interview suggested we were both equally comfortable in either language. Sometimes he would stop in midsentence and point out that he was now speaking English while I was speaking Spanish, or viceversa. The situation always elicited a big smile from him, as though we shared a private joke.

During his classes he often chose Spanish for the more formal communication with his teachers, and lapsed into English during informal conversation. One day he answered a teacher's question about beehives correctly in Spanish and then immediately asked the same teacher in English:"How do they live there?" His understanding of concepts seemed to cross languages. One day he helped a teacher translate the concept of "horseplay" into Spanish for the other children.

The size of the group seemed to make a lot of difference to Gilberto. In small groups he was almost always an active and eager participant while during large group lessons he often appeared to tune out the teacher. Independent work was particularly difficult for him. Sometimes he seemed tired and once even fell asleep while completing a worksheet in math.

Gilberto lagged behind many of his classmates in reading. He read haltingly in a sing-song style that seemed unrelated to the meaning of the passage. He confused some of the letters and was often accused by his teacher of making "careless errors." However, he also demonstrated good comprehension of his schoolwork, for example, he could accurately explain the concept of subtraction but then applied it carelessly. And he

demonstrated great practical knowledge in his conversations about money with his classmates. Gilberto was also heard to comment often "I already know that" or he pointed out redundance among the lessons presented by his many teachers.

Fortunately, given his complicated schedule, Gilberto seemed to have an adult's grasp of school routines and rules. He knew how many children in his class went to ESL, when every one of his special classes began and ended, how the reward systems worked in every classroom, and the likes and dislikes of teachers.

Discussion and analysis

After considering all the different ways in which Gilberto is viewed one may be tempted to say "Will the real Gilberto please stand up?" It is of course much easier to attempt an answer from the priviledged position of outside observers. We were privy to all the data and had the luxury of time to analyze it. What follows is an attempt at making sense of these different views and deriving from them an integrated view of Gilberto. We cannot claim that our integrated view is the real one. Reality is going to vary according to each individual's perception. But we think our interpretation, derived from careful analysis of what we learned, makes sense.

All those interviewed, including his mother, agree that Gilberto has not achieved well in school. Most have also commented on Gilberto's social competence. But school specialists, through their statements in the cumulative records, indicate that Gilberto's lack of achievement is due to a language problem as well as to serious perceptual problems which impair his ability to communicate, to see, and to hear. According to these specialists he is "learning disabled." These comments ignore the social and communicative skills so highly praised by Gilberto's mother, and teachers, and confirmed through our own interviews and observations.

Gilberto's teachers, while acknowledging his charm, believed that his home life was a detriment to his progress. A judgment that must be questioned since it was based on several factual errors. For example, Gilberto was one of seven, not ten children, he was not the youngest and he was not a foster child. Although poor, Gilberto's family did not appear neglectful. His mother's stories about his childhood, and her obvious worry about his tendency to run off with anyone, suggested a great deal of concern. During the home visits observers noted a great deal of order in the crowded

household. The children, all of whom came by at one time or another, were all neat and respectful in their behavior.

In spite of her problems with Gilberto, his mother was clearly admiring of his social competence and cleverness. It was hard for her to understand why he would have any problems in school. She acknowledged that he was slow in learning to read, but added that he was a much more competent reader now. Her acquiescence to the specialist's diagnosis of Gilberto's memory problem (dyspraxia) seemed to be a concession to what she assumed to be superior expertise. She herself was not convinced. Gilberto's behavior at home did not suggest to her any problems with memory. As far as she was concerned it was only as a matter of selective attention. But she went along because she believed the school staff was trying to help her son. Curiously, the teachers, in spite of their own observations, accepted and cited the specialists' diagnosis of dyspraxia as a possible cause for Gilberto's problems. Only his classroom teacher expressed some doubt:"I dont' know about this dyspraxia thing."

Gilberto described his school experience as he might have a commuting trip. But he had mastered the process and also seemed to enjoy it. His opinion of himself as a student, however, was not as self-confident. Gilberto's marks were not the lowest, yet he considered himself to be the worst student in the class. Although some of Gilberto's comments indicated that he was beginning to question the reasons for his special classes and the repetitiveness of his programs, he had apparently internalized adult injunctions that his problems were due to his lack of application.

We saw Gilberto as an articulate student, a competent commuter, and socially adept boy. His deficiencies in reading were obvious but his contributions to class discussions, his command of both languages, and his practical knowledge, did not indicate to us any cognitive or perceptual deficiencies. Gilberto often appeared to be tired during the school day. This tendency was almost always displayed when he was a part of a large group, particularly when he was doing independent work.

How then can we bring together these different perceptions? We found a clue in the school records. Between kindergarten and first grade, Gilberto changed school four times. Although early comments about Gilberto indicated no learning difficulties, by the end of the first grade he was flagged as one who needed to be "observed." And he was referred to the Child Study Team in the second grade.

The possible impact of these repeated school changes on Gilberto was not mentioned by any of the teachers or specialists we interviewed at the school. While we had no details on Gilberto's school experiences during those two years, it is reasonable to assume that each of these changes required social and academic adjustments on Gilberto's part. It is likely then that such changes would make it difficult for Gilberto to sustain steady academic progress. In addition, we did not know the language of instruction in these different schools. It is possible that Gilberto might have faced additional obstacles if each school change was accompanied by comparable changes in the language of instruction.

The diagnosis of Gilberto as perceptually impaired, having language difficulties, and "dyspraxic" must be questioned under the circumstances. Gilberto's behavior did not indicate any problem with language. On the contrary, his ability to communicate in both languages was one of his strengths. There was no time, during the three formal interviews, or during many informal exchanges with Gilberto, that we could discern any difficulty he might have had in expressing his thoughts. We agreed with his mother that his conversation was, if anything, adult-like and witty, rather than impaired. Although we did not test him, there was nothing in his behavior, except for the ocassional reversal of letters, that suggested visual impairment. And our observations, as well as his mother's comments, suggested that if he had any problems with his memory, they were more likely due to selective attention than to a cognitive deficiency.

Gilberto's tiredness was also not mentioned in his records or by his teachers. We puzzled about this behavior and considered three alternative explanations: lack of enough sleep, possible nutritional deficiencies, or perhaps, simply boredom. Each of these alternatives can be partially supported. Gilberto's mother had commented that they had strict rules at home regarding bedtime. But both she and Gilberto also commented on his early rising. He said he got up very early to come to school and would then get tired by midday. His mother also commented on his eagerness to go to school and his early rising, even on holidays. It was possible that in the crowded home conditions in which he lived, Gilberto was not getting enough sleep, even when required to be in bed by a certain time. Or perhaps those same conditions motivated him to get up and out of the house very early.

As noted before, Gilberto's family appeared to be very poor. Although the home was neat and orderly, it is likely that family resources were

strained. It was therefore possible that Gilberto's diet might not have been sufficient for a growing, active boy. Interestingly, this possibility was not raised by any of the specialists either.

Finally, our observations of Gilberto in different classes, and our interviews with him, suggest that just plain boredom might have been implicated in his tiredness. Gilberto was never inattentive in small group lessons. He was also active in the schoolyard and during lunchtime. His main problem was maintaining his attention in a large group, and particularly when working independently. In his classroom working "independently" meant filling out worksheets. It was during these activities that Gilberto's tiredness was most clearly a problem.

From our perspective then, Gilberto appeared to be a bright boy who was suffering the consequences of repeated changes which occurred early in his school career. His academic progress while slow, appeared to be reasonable given the likely impact of these changes. Specialists' diagnoses of Gilberto's problems appeared to have overlooked the contribution of these changes to his progress. In addition, school staff comments on Gilberto's home appeared to focus on the "problem" of family size and supposed neglect of the boy. Our inquiries discovered poverty but not neglect, crowdedness, but not disorder. We believe that the physical consequences of Gilberto's home environment were of more importance. Was his diet adequate? Was he getting enough rest? The search for an explanation for Gilberto's school problems might have been better served by attention to these rather pedestrian needs, rather than by the search for quasi-scientific but dubious explanations of perceptual and cognitive deficiencies.

Between Parents and Teachers

Asymmetrical relationship

The discrepancies between his mothers' and school personnel perceptions about Gilberto suggest an asymmetry in the school-parent relationship. This asymmetry was duplicated across most of the case studies. While both the school and the parent had discreet knowledge of the child these two views were not equally important. The school personnel's view carried much more weight in the decisions made about each child's school career. Information was not sought from the parents, at best it was regularly provided by the teachers, but sometimes information was withheld from the parents. As a result, each side's knowledge of the child was incomplete and often inaccurate. But while the parent's knowledge was mostly ignored, the

school's knowledge was assumed to be reliable and often took on a life of its own. This was the case with Victor.

With the best of intentions Victor's teachers contributed to serious misunderstandings between the school and the home. Victor's mother assumed her son was doing well in school since he brought little prizes home and she had not been called by the teachers. But her son was having both academic and behavior problems in school. His mother was not called because according to "school folklore" Victor had "...home problems. He is the caretaker for himself and his younger brother and sister and his mother doesn't often rise until noon..." Teachers also feared that she would beat the boy if they called about any problems. Victor's mother described her son as "...very industrious, he likes to help me around the house...He helps [his younger brother and sister] but pretty soon they're fighting because he talks to them as though he were their father. He says [to them]...the same things I say to him." Teachers' interpretations of the home situation, based on very scanty evidence, led them to isolate the boy's mother and prevent her from exerting a positive influence on him. From the observers' point of view, Victor appeared to excel in his manipulation of the school environment.

"School folklore" was also evident in the ascription of "weird religious rituals" to one family, and the assumption that another child was a foster child. As is the case with folklore, the stories are passed, unexamined, through the school's adult community and as described above, color their expectations and behavior.

The asymmetry between parent and teacher knowledge of the child was particularly evident among those children who had been designated as "learning disabled." The parents of those children seemed to have the least awareness of the designation or of what the label meant. One mother commented that she did not know "exactly what they're doing" in terms of her son's LD placement. Another was led to believe that as a result of a diagnostic work-up her daughter was now receiving "extra help" in reading. Another mother judged from her son's report card that he was "above average" although he was an LD student and his teachers considered him to be "below grade level."

Unfortunately, exclusion of the parents from the decision-making process tends to further narrow the possible explanations for the child's problems. Mehan, Hertweck & Miehls found that within the staffing committee meetings parents tended to contextualize the case and provide

alternative explanations.[2] If the parent is not present, or if present, if his/her opinions are differentially valued and/or discouraged,[3] the decision will be based on a much more narrower range of information. And within the context of permanent school records, the parent's perspective is almost totally absent. Those records are dominated by the statements of the school specialists who tend to locate disability within the child. This assumption of inherent deficiency will then follow the child throughout school and perhaps beyond.

Parental support

As with Gilberto's mother, these parents seemed to accept the judgment of "experts" and set aside their own doubts. This behavior was reinforced by the school's tendency to dismiss parental doubts. Lina's mother explained, "I know nothing about teaching. I just assumed they knew how to place her in the right language for instruction." She first questioned the "experts" when she learned her daughter was being instructed in English. But she was told that a change to a bilingual classroom at that time (first grade) would "confuse" the girl. It was not until later, when she was told that Lina would be retained, that she insisted in her challenge to the school's decision. As a result of her demands, and with the principal's support, her daughter was not retained but was instead placed in a bilingual classroom. Lina's later performance in that classroom supported her mother's intervention.

Only two sets of parents, both at Plaza School could claim actual knowledge of what was happening in the classroom. For the others support of the teachers seemed to be based on tacit acceptance of the belief that teachers should be supported. In spite of their children's difficulties, these parents appeared to have faith in the school and often blamed the children for their academic problems. Mateo's mother, for example, said it was his constant playing that kept him from learning more. One parent called Plaza School "the best school in town." And the Hispanic mothers at Freedom School repeatedly compared the teachers' concern for their children to that of a mother.

Special efforts by the teachers were well appreciated by the parents. One praised the speech therapist who had worked with her son since pre-school and had also been instrumental in getting the family to move to the Freedom School neighborhood. She noted that this teacher spoke Spanish and she found it easy to communicate with her. Gilberto's mother commented on the interest shown by his teacher the previous year. She had met with his

mother in school every Friday to give her work for him to do at home. The teacher would also come to the house if she was unable to visit the school. And two of the mothers were involved in dialogue journals with their children's teacher. They seemed to enjoy the consistency of the communication and the chance to verify their children's understanding of assigned homework.

Types of involvement

For some of the mothers, work schedule, or family responsibilites, made additional involvement very difficult. Andy's mother, for example, thought that her ability to "feed [her children] and keep a roof over their head," clothe, and get them to school, was a real accomplishment and one that would contributed to her son's life at school. .Only two mothers, both at Plaza School, reported frequent visits to the school and involvement with the PTA. Both of them often initiated contacts with the teachers. In contrast, most of the other parents waited for the teachers to initiate contact with them. They repeatedly noted how in the absence of contact they assumed that their child must be doing well.

In this study, as in others before it, the teachers' specific requests for the parents help received a prompt response from the parents.[4] It was also clear that although most parents did not spend much time in school, they did help their children at home. This was evident not only from the parents statements, but also from their specific mention of instructional content, or their accurate descriptions of their children's difficulties.

The tendency of most of these parents to leave the initiative for contact up to the school, and to assume that lack of teacher-initiated contact means lack of problems, has been noted by other researchers. It appears to be characteristic of low-income families and has often been interpreted as lack of concern for their children's education. When viewed against parent's comments in this study, it appeared to be more indicative of a deep trust in the institution.

These parents had high expectations for their children. They expected their children to "finish school" and they tended to project for them careers requiring extensive schooling. But for most of the parents the major concern centered on the hazards of living in an urban society. Physical safety, drugs, early parenthood, bad influences, and "people who want to hurt children" were most worrisome to these parents. Problems in school were relatively unimportant within this context, and most expected school problems to be

transitory. Their children would do better once they stopped playing around, or started paying attention, or began to realize the importance of school, they asserted.

For only two sets of parents were school-related issues a central concern. Gary's parents had specific academic concerns regarding his "learning disabilities" and "perceptual problems." They were very concerned about his reading, even though his teachers saw no problem and in fact considered him to be a good reader. And Yasmin's mother found that in spite of her highest hopes, her insistence on schoolwork, her offering of rewards, and her own personal interventions, Yasmin continued to do poorly in school. Yasmin's mother said she felt "demoralized," and had concluded that Yasmin's problems must be due to her lack of attention in school. Thus the parents tend to confirm the school's tendency to locate the problem within the child.

Conclusions

The potential of parent involvement in the improvement of student academic achievement should not be minimized. Recent educational research has provided convincing evidence of the contributions parents, even those from low income settings and with minimal schooling, can make to their children's academic achievement in school.[5] These findings lend support to the efforts initiated around the 1960's to increase parent involvement in schools. These efforts were specifically designed to increase the participation of parents of low SES children. A population that had been historically excluded from such traditional avenues for parental involvement as parent-teacher organizations and school volunteer programs.[6]

Many studies have since sought to document the relative effectiveness of one or another policy or mechanism for increasing parental involvement in the schools. It is assumed that given the right structure, parental involvement can be increased and as a result there will also be increases in pupil achievement. Much energy is therefore expended in the installation of new, more effective programs towards those goals. Van Galen argues that the success of these programs is hampered by stereotypes teachers hold of parents, particularly those who are less active in the school, and by formal and informal constraints placed on parents by school personnel who fear parental intrusion into their professional domain: "To the extent that decisions about how far parents can be trusted to work with their own children and how much effort should be expended to reach noninvolved

parents are based on shallow and inaccurate information, these policies tend to create outcomes consistent with the original assumptions.[7] The "school folklore" recorded at these schools was an example of these stereotypes and led to predictable results.

Sadly, the parents' tendency towards unquestioning support of the school, their interest in their children's education, and their willingness to provide help are underappreciated and undervalued in the schools. We can ill afford the loss of this resource. Educators who recognize this opportunity can gain a singular advantage in their goal to provide a better education for their students. But this will not be easy to accomplish. The teachers in this study were all caring individuals who worked very hard. Establishing and maintaining good lines of communication takes time and little of that is now available for teachers. Current social demands require a new vision of schools where teachers and parents join their energies for the benefit of students. It is perhaps time to admit that only drastic reductions in class size will make it possible for teachers to nurture the kind of home-school relationships that is based on true collaboration and can really make a difference.

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[2]Ibid. Handicapping the Handicapped.

[3]Smith, M.L. (1983). How educators decide who is learning disabled. Springfield, IL: Charles C. thomas.

[4]Epstein, J. (1984) Effects of teacher practices of parent involvement change in student achievement in reading and math. Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the AERA, Montreal, Canada.

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